

# The Status Report



Charles F. Hurley Building, 19 Staniford St., 6th Floor, Boston, MA 02114  
Web: [www.mass.gov/women](http://www.mass.gov/women) Phone: 617-626-6520 E-Mail: [mcsw@state.ma.us](mailto:mcsw@state.ma.us)

## Massachusetts Marks Women's Equality Day- A Letter From the Chair

Dear Friends and Supporters,

September is a time of new beginnings, new challenges, and new successes. As the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women commences a new year, we are committed to upholding our past legislative and social accomplishments while also making way for new developments.

The MCSW strives to remain active in both regional and statewide activities. An important event that brought together a wide variety of organizations was the commemoration of Women's Equality Day, which marked the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment this past month. The anniversary was celebrated by women across the Commonwealth on August 26, 2010. The movement for women's suffrage formally began in 1848, but women were not granted the right to vote until 1920. This was groundbreaking not only because it resulted in a constitutional amendment, but also because it was one of the first major movements to use civil disobedience as a principal tool in publicizing its goals and gaining the attention of politicians.

The remembrance of this date gives men and women across the country the opportunity to note the many sacrifices and efforts made by the original suffragettes. It also prompts one to recognize the steps that still need to be taken to bring women to full equality. For more information about personal involvement and the history of the women's rights movement, visit [legacy98.org](http://legacy98.org).

As we at the MCSW embrace the upcoming year, we hope to connect with many women and groups and to generate an open dialogue on contemporary women's issues. Please feel free to contact the MCSW online at [mcsw@state.ma.us](mailto:mcsw@state.ma.us) with any and all thoughts, opinions, and inquiries. Your engagement and activity is vital not only to the MCSW, but the women of Massachusetts.

Linda Cavioli  
Chair  
The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

## June Planning Session Yields Successful Results

The Commission convenes every June to discuss findings from public hearings and Commission outreach, and to develop a working agenda for the coming year.

Topics discussed in the collected testimonies from the 2009-2010 hearings included issues relating to the health care and domestic violence services offered to immigrant victims, as well as the availability of safe and affordable housing for teenage mothers. Additional areas of concern included the effect of a down economy on women's mental and emotional well being, and the current status of maternity leave.

The Commission has made it a top priority this past year to confront issues of pay equity. Its key focus has been An Act Further Defining Comparable Work, which seeks to define the term "comparable work" to include: "the comparability of two positions [that] shall be solely based on whether the two positions entail comparable skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions between employees of the opposite sex." Women who work full time and year-round still make just 77 cents of the dollar compared to their male counterparts.

In the coming year, the Commission also looks to expand its work in the area of economic self-sufficiency. In addition, the MCSW will identify opportunities to assist partner organizations to promote policies that increase the awareness and services related to violence against women.

Upcoming hearings for 2010-2011 will include: Fall River, which is scheduled for November 17, Fitchburg which is tentatively scheduled for February 9, and Boston which is tentatively scheduled for March 23. Please see the Future Public Hearings of the Year Article in this newsletter for more details.

## Essex County Commission Established!

At the end of the Fiscal Year 2010 formal legislative session, Governor Patrick signed into law An Act Establishing the Essex County Commission on the Status of Women. The bill, H3410, was sponsored by Representative Joyce Spiliotis of Peabody. Additional co-sponsors included Senators Bruce Tarr, and Representatives Lori Ehrlich, and Mary Grant.

The MCSW, as the appointing authority, is currently working with local representatives, regional organizations, and residents of Essex County to identify candidates for the Commission. The Essex County Commission on the Status of Women will consist of 9 commissioners residing within the county, and the members will be responsible for guiding and encouraging public discussions of all issues relating to women.

Interested applicants should contact the MCSW online at [mcsw@state.ma.us](mailto:mcsw@state.ma.us).

## County Commissioners Needed!

The MCSW is currently accepting applications for commissioner positions for all of the county women's commissions. These include the Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women, the Berkshire County Commission on the Status of Women, the Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women, and the newly formed Essex County Commission on the Status of Women. These commissions operate independently of one another, schedule and hold their own meetings, and pursue their own agendas as directed by local community feedback. The MCSW serves as the appointing authority to the county commissions and supports the work of each commission as ap-

Interested applicants are encouraged to contact the MCSW regarding more information on the responsibilities of commissioners. In general, the commitment includes attendance at commission meetings, participation in hearings and programs in order to gain a greater understanding of issues impacting women and their families, and the promotion of rights and equality for all women.

Women from the aforementioned counties who are interested in working to advance the rights of women are encouraged to apply. Applications are available upon request and on the MCSW web-site.

## Attorney General Honors 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Women's Suffrage

Over a dozen statewide organizations convened on Thursday, August 26<sup>th</sup> as part of Attorney General Martha Coakley's campaign to generate new educational opportunities that incorporate the history of women's suffrage.

The Massachusetts Women's Suffrage Celebration Committee met to honor Women's Equality Day and plan further celebrations for this fall. The meeting was attended by representatives from numerous organizations, including the MCSW, the MA Association of Women Lawyers, the MA Commission Against Discrimination, the Girl Scouts of Massachusetts, League of Women Voters, the Women's Bar Association, the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus, as well as other groups devoted to women's rights.

Events planned for this fall include a youth creative contest and movie screening. An essay contest will be open to Massachusetts high school juniors and seniors. They may choose one of three mediums in which to honor the contributions and achievements of women in US politics and civic life over the past 90 years. The Committee also plans to screen the film "Iron Jawed Angels" later this fall. The movie tells the story of the seventy year struggle for women's suffrage in the United States. The event will include a reception and panel discussion.

The commemoration of the historic date serves to acknowledge all of the personal sacrifices made by early suffragists, as well as giving an assurance that the women of Massachusetts will continue to work for equality for all people.

## Future Public Hearings for the Year

The MCSW is pleased to host a series of three public hearings in the approaching 2010-2011 year. These hearings act as forums for the women of Massachusetts to share information regarding issues which impact their lives, families, and communities. In addition, the hearings serve as an opportunity to convene and hear from local and regional organizations with a shared goal of advancing the status of women. The findings from the hearings are reported to the Legislature and the Administration, and inform the Commission's future agenda.

The forthcoming Fall River hearing will be held at the Family Services Associations of Greater Fall River, located at 101 Rock St on November 17<sup>th</sup>. The Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women and the MCSW have partnered in hosting the event, which will begin at 7 pm. The MCSW and BCCSW both look forward to engaging with local organizations and citizens. Refreshments will be offered.

Hearings hosted in Fitchburg and Boston will follow in 2011. The Fitchburg public hearing is tentatively scheduled for Fitchburg City Hall on February 9 at 6 pm. And the Boston public hearing is tentatively scheduled for March 23, with location and time to be confirmed.

## MassWIN to Undergo Updates

MassWIN, the women's information network created by the MCSW, has undergone evaluation this summer in anticipation of planned updates and edits in the coming year.

The site, which was created in 2006, is a resource designed specifically for the needs of women. It contains a database of reliable resources throughout the Commonwealth that assist women and their families; including shelters, food pantries, after school programs, women's health clinics, and a variety of other organizations.

The Commission hopes to review resource contact information, generate additional resources to further grow and develop the database, and ramp up promotion of the site in order to increase women's awareness of this valuable resource.

To visit the site, or to register a new organization in the database, please visit: <http://www.mcswnetwork.com/cgi-exec/csw.cgi>. Current members of the database, please check on your organization's entry to ensure that all contact information is up to date. Please contact the MCSW at [mcsw@state.ma.us](mailto:mcsw@state.ma.us) with your suggestions.

## MCSW is Now on LinkedIn

The MCSW has now joined the social networking site LinkedIn. The MCSW profile provides links to the Commission's website and offers a summary of its purpose. Additionally, it provides a vital social networking connection to other professionals and organizations in Massachusetts.

The MCSW continues to expand its presence in social networking media, and is currently on Facebook under the Group pages application. Please visit our new LinkedIn page at [www.linkedin.com/in/mcswlink](http://www.linkedin.com/in/mcswlink).

## MCSW Supports Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition at State House

During the month of July, as the year's formal legislative session came to a close, the MCSW visited the State House with the Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition to speak with legislators regarding the importance of the Paid Sick Day Bill. An Act Establishing Paid Sick Days, House bill 1815, would permit all Massachusetts workers to earn up to 7 days of paid sick leave each year. The legislation is sponsored by Senator Patricia Jehlen and Representative Kay Khan.

The Coalition actively supports the bill because paid sick days would reduce of potential public health risks, as employees would not come into the workplace spreading germs and slowing productivity. Furthermore, low income employees would not have to risk the loss of income necessary for housing, schooling, and other necessities.

Unfortunately, the Act was stalled in the House Committee on Ways and Means at the end of the formal session. However, the Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition has not ceased in their efforts and will continue to petition in favor of the bill.

## Women's Resource Center Hosts 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Art Show

This month, the Women's Resource Center of Newport and Bristol Counties will be celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an art show. The opening reception will be hosted on September 16 from 5pm-8pm at Gallery X, located at 169 Williams St, New Bedford. Featured artwork will include pieces created by the center alumnae from the past four decades, and will be displayed until the 24<sup>th</sup>.

The center seeks to empower domestic violence victims through innovative means of education, support, advocacy, and individual and social change.